

Fact Sheet

Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity

The mission of the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) is to create equal housing opportunities for all persons living in America by administering laws that prohibit discrimination in housing.

On April 11, 1968, one week after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King ,Jr., President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the federal Fair Housing Act into law. The Fair Housing Act, as amended, prohibits housing discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, and familial status.

Reducing housing discrimination is a core function of HUD's mission. To do this, HUD enforces fair housing laws and educates lenders, housing providers, developers, architects, homeseekers, landlords, and tenants about their rights and responsibilities under the law. Working with state and local partners – as well as the private and non-profit sectors – the Department is involved in a cooperative effort to ensure equal access to housing so that every American can obtain the housing of their choice.

The Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) is responsible for implementing and enforcing the Fair Housing Act and other civil rights laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 109 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, and Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968.

FHEO key functions and responsibilities include:

- Enforcing the Fair Housing Act;
- Managing the Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP);
- Administering the grant competition for and managing the Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP);
- Proposing fair housing legislation and regulations;
- Working with other government agencies on fair housing issues;
- Conducting Title VI, Section 109, and Section 504 compliance reviews to ensure that HUD-funded recipients are using HUD funds to affirmatively further fair housing and to ensure that individuals with limited English proficiency have access to HUD programs and services; and
- Interpreting policy, processing complaints, performing compliance reviews, and offering technical assistance to local housing authorities and community

development agencies regarding Section 3.

FHEO and its Fair Housing Assistance Program partners (FHAPs) investigate fair housing complaints free of charge. A complainant may choose to hire a private attorney; however, this is not a requirement. Each year, HUD and its FHAP agencies receive more than 10,000 housing discrimination complaints. The majority of the complaints are related to disability (45 percent) or race (37 percent) discrimination. However, allegations of discrimination against members of the other protected classes (color, national origin, sex, religion and familial status) are also received. Currently, there are 108 substantially equivalent jurisdictions functioning as FHAP agencies. These agencies operate in 37 states, 70 localities, and the District of Columbia.

FHEO awards grants to fair housing groups and organizations to help HUD enforce the Fair Housing Act and to educate the public about fair housing. Fair Housing groups also conduct preliminary investigation of claims, including sending "testers" to properties suspected of engaging in housing discrimination. Testers are minorities and whites with the same financial qualifications who evaluate whether housing providers treat equally-qualified people differently. HUD awards about 100 grants per year.

If a person believes his or her fair housing rights have been violated, there are three ways to file a complaint with HUD:

- Visit www.hud.gov/fairhousing and click on "File a housing discrimination complaint" to access the on-line complaint form.
- Call 1-800-669-9777 and a FHEO representative will file the complaint via phone.
- Submit written correspondence. There is a complaint form included in many of FHEO's information brochures. A letter detailing the complaint can also be mailed to HUD headquarters or the nearest regional office.